



Radon in Ohio Homes

Introduction

This fact sheet provides information from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) on radon and how to protect your family's health. ODH, the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommend every Ohio home be tested for radon.

What is radon?

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the decay of uranium found in rocks and soil in. Radon is odorless, colorless and tasteless.

Why is radon important?

Radon presence in your home is known to pose a danger to your family's health. Breathing air with elevated level of radon over a period of time can cause damage to lung tissue and cells. This damage increases the risk of lung cancer. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer among smokers and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

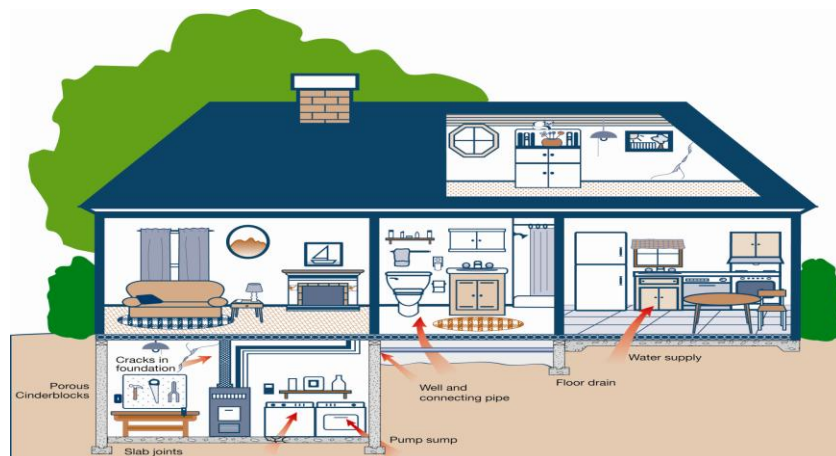
Why is radon a common problem in Ohio homes?

Much of the soil in Ohio contains quantities of uranium and radium. These minerals continuously break down and release radon gas. Therefore, Ohio's geology provides an ongoing supply of radon. Although radon is present throughout the environment, radon levels indoors are generally higher which increases the risk of cancer. Elevated levels of radon have been found in homes in all 88 counties in Ohio.

How does radon enter a home?

Radon, because it is a gas, it is able to move through spaces in the soil. Ohio homes tend to operate under a negative pressure which acts as a vacuum (suction) to pull soil gases, including radon, into the lower level of a structure – this is especially true during the heating season. Air used by fireplaces, wood stoves and furnaces create a vacuum effect as do clothes dryers and exhaust fans that vent air to the outside.

Radon can enter a home through the floor and walls – anywhere there is an opening between the home and the soil. Examples of such openings include dirt floor crawl spaces, unsealed sumps, utility openings and cracks in the foundation floor and walls.



What happens after radon gets into the home?

Once radon enters a home it moves freely throughout the indoor air by means of diffusion, natural air movement or it can be distributed by mechanical equipment such as forced air ventilation system. As the radon moves throughout the home people are breathing it into their lungs. Breathing air with elevated levels of radon damages the tissue and cells in the lungs and increases the risk of lung cancer.

How can I find out if my home has a radon problem?

A radon test is the only way to find out if your home has elevated levels of radon. Performing a radon test is easy, inexpensive and can be done privately. Every home is unique due to its local soil, construction details and maintenance. Therefore, test results from nearby homes cannot be relied upon to predict the radon level in another home. Likewise, previous test results may not reflect current and future radon levels for a home. Remodeling, changes made to the heating, air conditioning or other ventilation systems, adding exhaust fans or other home improvements can influence radon levels in a home. **ODH recommends all Ohio homeowners test their homes for radon.**

How can I protect my family from radon?

Fix your home. If your radon test indicates that your home has elevated levels of radon, have a radon mitigation system installed by an ODH licensed mitigation contractor. A quality radon mitigation system is often able to reduce the annual average radon level to below 2 picoCuries per Liter (2pCi/L) of air. The Indoor Radon Program at ODH can provide homeowners with a list of licensed contractors in their area.

Where can I get more information on radon?

Additional information about radon can be found at:

Ohio Department of Health
Indoor Radon Program
www.odh.ohio.gov
1-800-523-4439

US EPA
www.epa.gov/radon
1-800-SOS-RADON